

ENVS/IR 331 GLOBAL ECOLOGICAL CRISIS Spring 2016
Glenn Fieldman, Instructor. E-mail: glenn@sfsu.edu Office: HSS 330, phone 405-2431
Office Hours: M 1-2, 4-5. T 6-7. Other times by appointment.

SYLLABUS

The web of life on earth, of which we are part and on which we depend for our existence, is in deep trouble. It's in so much trouble that a catastrophic collapse of human civilization resulting from, for instance, a drastic decline in agricultural production (leading to massive migrations, wars, and uprisings) is seen by many analysts as a likely outcome of our present relations with the earth and with each other.

The earth is finite: it has limits. The oceans can produce only so many fish; there is only so much arable (farmable) land; only so much fresh water. Humans are pressing against those limits by, for example, taking too many fish from the sea—so many that there are too few fish left to reproduce themselves and re-stock the fisheries. The earth's ability to absorb wastes and render them harmless is also limited, and human activities are threatening to overfill (or may have already overfilled) the atmospheric, water and soil 'sinks' for various kinds of human waste, including the carbon dioxide waste from fossil fuel burning. Over-filled sinks seem to be the most serious set of problems we have produced for ourselves; the atmospheric sink for carbon dioxide is the prime example. The 30+ billion tons of heat-trapping carbon dioxide per year that we pour into the atmosphere are destabilizing the climate in which humans—and many of the species on earth—evolved. Many of those species will not survive more than a degree or two of temperature increase—yet we are on track to experience as much as 8 degrees F or more by the end of this century unless we act fast.

Unfortunately, many of the rules, institutions and practices that now govern the global and national political economies are designed to promote corporate profits and economic growth even at the expense of the earth on which we all depend. For example, trade agreements like NAFTA and institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO) have helped to create a global economy in which more and more goods are traded over long distances, leading to explosive growth in global transportation—and in climate-changing carbon emissions from all of the ships, planes and trucks that crisscross the earth. Those rules, institutions and practices are the main subject matter of this class.

The earth has been overworked to produce a cornucopia of goods, more than enough to provide everyone a decent life. But it hasn't—most of the environmental damage has been done to provide **some** of the global population with a very comfortable life and a **few** with a truly extravagant life (multiple houses, private jets, 250-foot yachts, etc.). As Thomas Pogge points out in the article assigned, **half** of the world's population still lives in severe poverty. Many, especially in the bottom 25%, suffer from hunger, but all in the bottom half live desperately hard and insecure lives that consist mostly of work and worry. **We are told that the solution to the poverty problem is more economic growth—but that ignores two things: first, that the earth's productive capacity is already at or beyond its limits; and second, that for the past three or so decades, the extra income from economic growth has gone mostly to the "haves", not to the "have-nots," so poverty is not primarily a growth problem; it's a *distribution* problem.**

As Pogge points out, this distribution (or mal-distribution) problem also results from the rules and institutions of the global political economy—for instance, rules that allow investors to invest everywhere they can earn the highest returns and consumers to get the best deal on any product from almost anywhere in the world. (But the rules **don't** allow workers to freely move anywhere they can earn the highest wage, and they **don't** allow communities to say to investors, "we don't want your type of industry here.") By institutions, Pogge means entities such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, which exercise enormous influence over developing countries, in particular—and which play large roles in determining how the world's natural resources are used or misused, and for whose benefit. These rules and institutions are shaped by powerful corporations whose primary goal is profit, so they *do* want freedom to make money—for instance, by paying rock-bottom wages—and they *don't* want restrictions on fishing, timber harvesting, or fossil fuel use. Their money buys them

a lot of influence with policymakers, and it is policymakers who run national governments and dispatch diplomats to international conferences.

The environmental crisis and global poverty have been the subject of international conferences for several decades. International relations “institutionalists” claim that the common interests of most of humanity in dealing with these problems can result in international agreements that will solve them. But climate summits held every year since 1992 have notably failed to bring about reductions in carbon emissions, and global poverty is stubbornly persistent. (Some argue that the climate agreement reached in Paris in December of last year may interrupt this trend, but even the optimists agree that the commitments countries made in Paris are not enough to stabilize global average temperatures at levels considered to be “safe.”) Consequently, critical, or “social green” views are capturing increasing amounts of attention among scholars of international politics and environmental crisis. We will spend considerable time in this class on the critical claim that new agreements overlaying the existing set of corporate-driven rules and institutions are not likely to achieve meaningful results. Instead, the critics argue that what we need are reforms to the political economy itself—substantial ones. Because institutions like the World Bank and World Trade Organization (WTO) reflect corporate interests, critical social greens believe that they are part of the problem, not—as liberal institutionalists believe—part of the solution. The assigned readings emphasize that social greens want a global political-economic system *based on* the recognition of environmental limits and organized to satisfy everybody’s needs rather than the wants of those who have money to spend.

REQUIRED READING: Richard Douthwaite, *The Growth Illusion*; Angus Wright, *The Death of Ramon Gonzales*; Arundhati Roy, *Power Politics*. All three books are available from the university bookstore, although you may buy them elsewhere if you wish. E-book versions of Douthwaite and Wright are available. None of these books is new. Douthwaite’s book, in particular, was first published when the phenomenon we now call “globalization” was not yet a subject of discussion among the general public, or even among most academics (I ordered a revised edition that’s more recent.) I chose these books rather than more recently published ones because I think they offer the clearest, most accessible, and best-illustrated explanations of the complex processes we are considering. **A number of online readings are assigned according to topic below; they are also required. Links to these readings are on the iLearn site for this class.**

Learning objectives: By the end of this semester, you should have acquired an understanding of, and be able to explain and give examples of,

- the earth’s physical and biological limits and the risks to “sources,” “sinks,” and the human future from continued economic growth;
- the basic characteristics and workings of capitalism as a political-economic system, including the global and national loci of power (political and economic), its proclivity for growth, its logical and practical outcomes, the distribution of its benefits and costs, and how these outcomes stem from its characteristics;
- the role of imperialism in capitalist development, and the “divided planet” that imperialism brought about;
- the functions of the World Bank, IMF, and global and regional trade agreements (GATT/WTO, NAFTA, and new proposed agreements);
- critical perspectives on current political/economic arrangements from “social greens” and the global South, contrasted with orthodox views;
- opportunities for (and obstacles to) citizen intervention in relevant political processes.

What is expected from students:

1. **Regular class attendance and completion of the assigned reading.** This is fairly complex subject matter. You will have a hard time passing this class unless you attend all class sessions and do all the assigned reading. Readings and lectures complement each other, but reading doesn’t substitute for class

attendance and *vice versa*. **I strongly recommend that you take notes during class. The act of note-taking helps to fix material in your mind and will be helpful for exam review.**

2. **Participation.** Questions and comments are welcome. You will learn more if you participate.
3. **Two in-class exams: midterm and final (combination multiple choice/short answer and essay), 25% each. Each exam will include a take-home portion**
4. **Two papers (3-4 single-spaced pages in 12-point font) guided by the prompts below. NOTE THAT PLAGIARISM—the use of others’ words without appropriate citations and/or quotation marks--IS EASIER TO DETECT THAN YOU MAY THINK, AND IT MAY RESULT IN A FAILING GRADE. If you are not sure how to quote and cite appropriately, please ask! Your grade will depend upon how well your paper displays your understanding of the issue/author’s arguments; the quality of your analysis, how well you support your conclusions, and the quality of your writing.** You should evaluate and analyze, NOT just describe. Always keep in mind that you need to provide evidence to support claims that you make, and cite the sources of your evidence.

Paper one. 3-4 single-spaced pages. Based primarily on Douthwaite and Wright books; incorporate at least one additional source, which should be shown at the end of the paper. Cite all sources (for the books, cite page or e-book location number). Due in class Monday, March 28. Douthwaite and Wright both express admiration for “traditional” agriculture—that is, the kind of agriculture practiced in most of the world by peasant communities before capitalism, development and international trade transformed it profoundly. What about traditional agriculture do they admire, and why? Consider environmental impacts and the quality of social life in village agriculture. Both authors also advocate policies that would foster at least a partial relocalization of agriculture, with much more local control over what is produced, how, and how much. Imagine what this might mean to people like us, by which I mean consumers in *developed* countries. Conclude with your own opinion of the “relocalization” argument. Be sure to support your opinion with evidence—logical, factual, experiential.

Paper two. 3 single-spaced pages + “works cited” page, using a *minimum* of three sources. Due Monday, May 23. Deliver to HSS 210, ask staff to put paper in my mailbox. Because the final exam for this class is early, I’m giving you a few extra days to get your papers in—BUT THAT MEANS I’M GOING TO BE VERY HARSH ABOUT LATE PAPERS. Many “free trade” agreements, beginning with NAFTA but including others such as CAFTA and individual agreements between the US and other countries, allow foreign investors to sue governments. (The proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership also contains this so-called “investor-to-state” provision.) The government of El Salvador, which recently banned gold mining because it is environmentally destructive, is currently being sued by an investor using the “investor-to-state” provisions of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). After explaining what investor-to-state provisions are, describe the case, and use it to explain why many environmentalists and social justice advocates are hostile to including these provisions in “free trade” agreements.

APPROXIMATE SCHEDULE

1/27	Introduction to course and assignments
2/9	LAST DAY TO DROP.
2/1-10	Ecological crisis: a systems view. Read Bill McKibben, "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math," the Forward, the Introduction and Ch.1 – 3 of Douthwaite, and the Introduction and Ch. 1 of Wright. Also watch the video "Understanding Exponential Growth." Links to article/video are on iLearn.
2/23	LAST DAY TO ADD WITH A PERMIT.
2/15-22	Poverty, inequality, environmental injustice. Read "Thomas Pogge on the Past, Present and Future of Global Poverty" Ch.2 of Wright, Ch. 4 and 5 of Douthwaite.
2/24-3/2	Capitalism: what it is, how it works, why it grows. Douthwaite, Ch. 6 and 7. Wright, Ch. 3 and 4.
3/7-3/16	Imperialism and the creation of the global economy. Read "World Slavery and Caribbean Capitalism: The Cuban Sugar Industry, 1760-1868, by Dale Tomich. Also read "Unequal Protection: The Boston Tea Party Revealed," by Thom Hartmann, which explains the role of corporations in the imperial conquest of the world. Also read Douthwaite, Ch. 8 and 9, Wright, Ch. 5, 6 and 7. INSTRUCTOR WILL PROVIDE TAKE-HOME QUESTION FOR MIDTERM EXAM.
3/20	LAST DAY TO REQUEST CREDIT/NO CREDIT GRADING OPTION.
3/21-25	SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS.
3/28	MIDTERM EXAM. PAPER ONE DUE.
3/30	The US as global superpower. Read "What is Neoliberalism," by Martinez and Garcia, and Douthwaite, Ch. 10 and 11, and Wright, Ch. 8.
4/4-4/20	The Bretton Woods institutions: Read the article "Justice delayed 30 years in Guatemala" (about a World-Bank-funded project "The Lower Aguan in Honduras and the deadly battle over land rights," "20 questions about the IMF," and "Structural Adjustment, a Major Cause of Poverty." Also read Douthwaite, Ch. 12 and 13, Wright, Ch. 9, and Roy (all).
4/25-5/9	New generation trade agreements: from GATT to the TPP. Finish Wright (Ch. 10 plus the "Afterword,"), read Douthwaite, Ch.14 and 15, and read "Trans Pacific Partnership will Undermine Democracy, Empower Transnational Corporations." INSTRUCTOR WILL DISTRIBUTE TAKE-HOME QUESTION FOR FINAL.
5/11-16.	Sustainability and Justice: reforming the global political economy. Finish Douthwaite, including "Epilogue." PAPER TWO IS DUE <i>AFTER</i> THE FINAL-Monday May 23 in Hss 210.
5/18 (Wednesday)	FINAL EXAM, 1:30-4

**POLICIES OF THE COLLEGE OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SCIENCES on next page
PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!**

AS OF December 18, 2016
THIS INFORMATION IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE
College of Health and Social Sciences
Standard Wording for All Syllabi

Spring 2016

From: Dean Alvin Alvarez

B. CHSS Policy

Syllabi are to incorporate the Academic Senate Policy regarding finals week, the deadlines or withdrawals, late adds, CR/NC option and information related to course registration and Disability Programs and Resource Center. A sample listing of the required College policies are shown below.

Final Exam: According to Academic Senate policy F76-12 a time period is set aside at the end of each semester for a formal examination period. All classes are expected to meet during the final examination period whether an examination is given or not. The final examination schedule is published each semester in the Class Schedule.

http://www.sfsu.edu/~acadres/final_exams/finals16.htm

CHSS Withdrawal Policy: The last day to drop a class is **February 9, 2016 until 11:59pm**. Starting **February 10 – April 26, 2016**, you must submit a paper withdrawal petition. Withdrawal from a class starting **February 10, 2016** will be considered for *serious and compelling* reasons only and **must have accompanying documentation**. The following reasons are **not** considered *serious and compelling*: Changing your major, poor performance, class not required for graduation/major, not attending class or more time needed for other classes. If you wish to withdraw from class due to unexpected changes in your work schedule, illness or family emergencies, **documentation will be required**, along with a copy of unofficial transcripts. Submit your petition **within a reasonable timeframe (e.g., within 2 weeks of a change in work hours.)** From **April 27 – May 17, 2016**, you may not withdraw from a class or the University, except only in the case of a **serious** documented illness or verified accident.

Withdrawals **cannot** be initiated electronically and must be submitted using a paper application. All electronic submissions of withdrawals will be denied automatically by the associate dean. **You are only allowed to withdrawal from a maximum of 18 units and take a class no more than 2 times at SF State.** Approval from the instructor and/or chair does not constitute automatic approval from the associate dean so continue attending class until a decision is made. Please refer to the following website for further information on withdrawal policies: <http://chss.sfsu.edu/src>

CR/NC Option: The last day to request CR/NC option is **March 20, 2016 until 11:59pm**. The Associate Dean will not approve requests for changes if you miss this deadline.

Late Add Policy: The period to add classes via permission numbers is **January 27 – February 9, 2016**. The period to add classes by Exception is **February 10 – February 23, 2016**. It is your responsibility to procure a late permission number from your instructor and add the class. Faculty cannot add you into a class. Starting **February 24, 2016**, a Waiver of College Regulations form must be signed by your instructor, Chair and CHSS Associate Dean to add. This will be approved only if there was an administrative error.

Check your registration through SF State Gateway: Sign up for CR/NC, drop and add classes by the appropriate deadline online through *SF State Gateway*. **ALWAYS** check your registration after making any changes and **BEFORE** deadlines to be sure you are registered properly for your classes. Deadlines for all registration procedures, including withdrawals and requests for credit/no credit, are listed in the class schedule and will be strictly adhered to by the instructor, the Department Chair and the Associate Dean of College of Health & Social Sciences. **It is ALWAYS the student's responsibility to ensure their schedule is correct, even if the instructor indicates they will drop you.**

This can be viewed on the Registration Calendar at the following website: <http://www.sfsu.edu/~admisrec/reg/regsched2163.html>

Disability Programs and Resource Center: Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to work with the instructor and contact Disability Programs and Resource Center (DPRC). They are located in SSB 110, can be reached by telephone at 415-338-2472 (voice/TTY) or by e-mail at dprc@sfsu.edu.

Student Disclosures of Sexual Violence: SF State fosters a campus free of sexual violence including sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or any form of sex or gender discrimination. If you disclose a personal experience as an SF State student, the course instructor is required to notify the Dean of Students. To disclose any such violence confidentially, contact:

The SAFE Place - (415) 338-2208; http://www.sfsu.edu/~safe_plc/

Counseling and Psychological Services Center - (415) 338-2208; <http://psyservs.sfsu.edu/>

For more information on your rights and available resources: <http://titleix.sfsu.edu>

